Recent Pakistan visit

1841. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:
SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the recent Pakistan tour included visit to 'Takshshila';

(b) whether it is a fact that the age old cultural unity was recalled rather than political ties of the States; and

(c) whether it is planned to utilize the cultural unity to resolve the differences within the country?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Yes. During his visit to Taxila on January 14, 2007, EAM said that India and Pakistan share a common heritage and culture which can bring the two countries together to resolve their bilateral issues. Promoting people-to-people contact and cooperating in area such as art, culture, tourism and sports is part of Government's policy to improve bilateral relations with Pakistan.

Demarcation of sea-zone

†1842. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a meeting between the Indian and Pakistani experts of water, was held in December, 2006 in order to give final touches to the modalities of joint survey of Sir Creek area with a view to demarcate the sea-zone;

(b) if so, the results of this meetings;

(c) whether it is a also a fact that Pakistan had started the dispute regarding 12 miles long belt of this area 22 years ago; and

(d) if so, the reasons for not resolving this dispute during the last 22 years and the policy of Government of India regarding this area?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) Discussions on demarcation of the boundary in Sir Creek area have been taking place since 1969. On 22-23 December 2006, technical level talks on Sir Creek led by Hydrographers of India and Pakistan were held in Rawalpindi to decide the coordinates for joint survey of the Sir Creek and adjoining areas without prejudice to the positions of the two countries, as well as to hold discussions simultaneously on the maritime boundary. At this meeting, the two sides worked out the technical details of the joint survey. It was agreed to commence the joint survey from 15th January 2007. It was also agreed to verify the outermost points of coastlines of both countries during the joint survey with regard to the equidistance method. The joint survey began on January 15, 2007 as agreed by both sides.

Safety of Indians in Afghanistan

1843. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:
SHRI AMAR SINGH:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indians residing in Afghanistan and the number of persons killed during the last year;

(b) whether it is a fact that Indians in Afghanistan are told to stay away from Southern Afghanistan and if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) Government's reaction towards the safety of Indians in Afghanistan?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) There are approximately 3,500 Indian nationals residing in Afghanistan. Two Indian nationals were killed in Afghanistan last year. In February 2006, Shri Bharath Kumar, working for a US based company, was killed in a land mine blast. In April 2006, an Indian engineer, Shri K Suryanarayan, working with a Bahrain based firm was taken hostage and killed by suspected Taliban elements in Ghazni province of Afghanistan.

(b) No.

(c) Our Mission/Posts in Afghanistan issue regular security advisories and updates for the benefit of Indians working in Afghanistan. Indian workers are urged to register themselves with the Indian Embassy or any of the